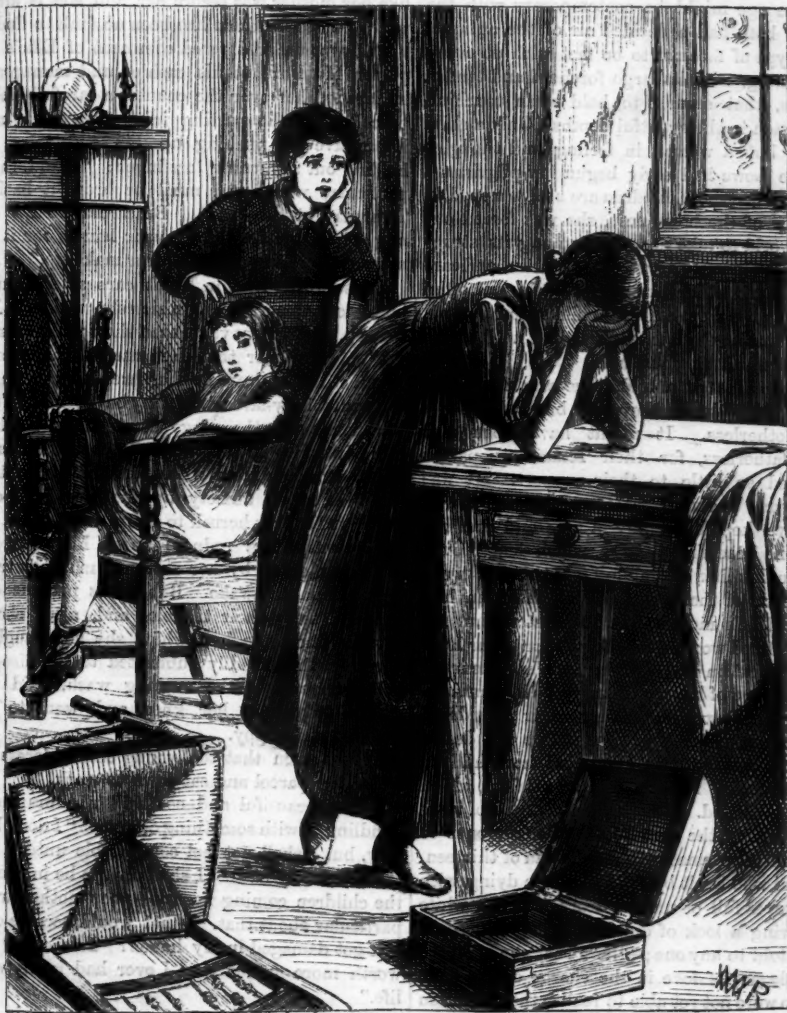


# THE QUIVER

Saturday, June 1, 1867.



(Drawn by W. RIDLEY.)

"They saw her bowed over the table."—p. 579.

## EFFIE'S TRIAL

### CHAPTER I.

It was a fragile little figure, quaintly dressed in some faded flimsy fabric, much too thin for the biting March wind, and a worn grey cloak,

which had seen its best days, and had evidently never been made for its present wearer. No wonder that many passers-by turned to look after the vision, as it went on with fleet foot

through the cold grey streets, threading its way through the crowds, with the fearless self-reliance that is born of stern necessity. There was something inexpressibly sad and sweet about the small pale face, of which you caught a passing glimpse under the shadow of the old-fashioned straw bonnet, whose age might be contemporary with the cloak, for both had a decided air of the antique. It was a type of face not to be met with at every street-turning, with its large forehead and tender grey eyes, that seemed to hold some touching story written in their wistful depths. Only a child in years, but a woman in feeling and thought, little Effie Lowe had early begun her pilgrimage. At an age when most children are still wrapped in the shelter of the home-nest, she was forced out into the world to take her place among its struggling bread-winners; to work, and strive, and care for herself and others, until her little feet often trembled by the way, and her child's heart would have sunk under the burden, if it had not been as brave as it was loving and true.

Her history is soon told. She was the eldest of a family of three; they had been about two years motherless. It might have been also written fatherless, for their remaining parent contributed so little to their support. He was an engraver, a skilled master of his craft, who might have kept his family in ease and comfort, but for one besetting passion, which had proved the bane of his life. Gambling,—in that one word lay the secret of the ruin which had fallen on him and his. Effie's mother was the first victim. A delicate, refined woman, much superior to her husband in education and training, she had incurred the displeasure of her own family by her marriage with Edward Lowe, whom they never considered worthy of her. For some time before her death, she had almost entirely supported her children by her rare skill in embroidery; a talent which Effie had inherited. She died in the midst of their poverty, leaving the care of the younger ones to the thoughtful premature child-woman of thirteen. It was she who knelt by the bed of the dying, with her grey eyes full of unshed tears, and her white face wearing a look of dumb suffering that could never be told to any one;—there that she accepted the last legacy of love in the charge of the little ones, who were not yet able to realise their position—and bravely took on her own young head the burden that her mother was laying down for ever.

"You will try to take my place to Bennie and little Polly?" murmured the faint broken voice; "and some day, perhaps, you may be the means of leading your father back to a better life. Effie, you have been my only comfort, and you will be theirs. God bless you and the others. I leave you all to that Father who feeds the sparrows, and will not let His little children want."

## CHAPTER II.

"WELL, Roberts, as you say, it is scarcely the thing to trust an expensive material like this to such a child; but the little thing seems to belong to a respectable set. Then she is a clever hand, like her mother was before her, and she is always punctual; so far there has been no fault to find."

This was the whispered comment of Effie's employer, Mr. Ford, to his cashier and manager, as he handed her over the counter a carefully-folded parcel, with the parting injunction, made more impressive by pushing up his spectacles and holding out a warning forefinger: "Mind, this is particular work, and must be brought back by Thursday at the latest. Be careful that it does not get damaged while in your hands, for it is of more value than you could ever make up."

Those words rang in Effie's ears as she hurried home to the poor lodging which she worked so hard to keep. "Of more value than she could ever make up." No wonder that she guarded the precious parcel with such care as she threaded the maze of disreputable by-streets, that lay between Mr. Ford's warehouse and the dingy court where she lived, scarcely daring to breathe freely until she was safe in her own poor room, where she had been watched for with much anxiety by the two little ones. Polly was crying herself to sleep, and Bennie, with a very suspicious redness about his eyes, was mounting guard by her side, and manfully trying to keep himself awake. But Effie's presence soon charmed away their trouble; and, after sharing between them the bun which she had bought on her way, they readily submitted to the disagreeable necessity of the evening wash, said their simple prayers at her knee, and went to rest, satisfied and happy.

It was then that the young embroideress unfolded her parcel and sat down to work.

"How beautiful and costly!" she murmured, handling it with something of awe. "I don't know why, but I shall not feel comfortable until I have taken it safely back. I shall always be in dread of the children coming near it—poor mother was so particular about that. What would become of me if it got damaged in my hands? I dare say it is worth more money than I ever had in my whole life."

Unceasingly the busy fingers plied their task, though her eyes ached with weariness, and her heart was unusually sad that night. It was very late when her father came in, with flushed face and hurried movement, and the excited glitter in his eyes that she never liked to see there.

"What! still up and working, Effie! You must go to bed."

"You are not going out again, father," she said, looking up with one of her wistful, pleading looks.

"Yes, I am obliged; but only for an hour. I will let myself in with the key."

Her eyes dropped. She knew, from sad experience, that in those moods it was useless to try to persuade him. He came and bent over her, so close that his hot breath touched her cheek, and asked, clutching at the chair-back in his eagerness, "Effie, have you any money?"

"I have not, father; you took my last shilling this morning."

A pang of shame should have wrung his heart at those words; for it seemed like coining into money the life-blood of the slender little creature before him, thus to appropriate her hard earnings. He was getting more excited.

"Effie, can't you manage me a few shillings, to save me from ruin—disgrace? I may be able to give you back three times the sum to-morrow."

"I tell you, father, I have none."

"But you have been to the warehouse to-night," he said, with a quick glance at her work.

"Yes; but the money they gave me has gone for coals and bread. I could not let the children starve."

"Then you won't try to get me anything, Effie—neither money nor money's worth. Is there nothing that I can pawn?"

"Nothing, father."

At that moment his eyes rested on her work; it might have been merely an inadvertent glance, without meaning or design, but it frightened the girl. She dropped her needle, and instinctively drew the brown paper over it. He seemed too angry to notice anything, for he went out without another word, slamming the door violently after him.

Anxiety about her father kept Effie awake most of the night. It was long past midnight when she put aside her work, and crept to bed, thoroughly worn out, poor child; it was no fitting preparation for the trial that was coming with the morrow.

It was broad day when she was awakened by the voices of the children, and the touch of Bennie's hands on her face. He told her that he had been looking for father, and could not find him anywhere.

It was true, then; he had never returned: and yet she had a sort of dim fancy that, between sleeping and waking, she had heard him come in, and seen him moving about the room, with the candle in his hand, as if in search of something. But she tried to persuade herself that it was only a dream. In spite of her night-watching, Effie was busy as a bee, until she had done all that was necessary, before sitting down to work. But there was a weight of sorrow on her heart, and her eyes often filled with unbidden tears, as she thought of her father. She

could not answer the children's questions about him, nor could she raise her voice in the little hymn which it was her custom to sing with them every morning. Why did he not return? breakfast was waiting; as usual, she had abridged her own meal, that there might be more to set before him. Good, devoted Effie, how would she bear the crushing blow that was about to fall?

The children were playing at the further end of the room, when they were suddenly startled by a sharp cry from their sister. The poor innocents were struck with terror when they saw her bowed over the table, her chair overturned, and the little box in which she kept her work lying empty on the floor beside her, and she sobbing so piteously to herself, with her face buried in her hands, as if she would never raise it again.

What could be done? Her work which she had packed away so safely the night before, was missing—stolen, and by whom? God help her. She had already divined the truth. It was no dream, when she saw her miserable father creeping about the room with the candle in his hand. What will not a phrenzied gambler risk, when it is his last stake, and he has reached the lowest depth of ruin and despair?

#### CHAPTER III.

"This is a bad business, Roberts," said Mr. Ford to his confidant, touching his shining bald head meditatively with the feather of his pen; "a very bad business, I would rather have paid the value of the stuff out of my own pocket, than find myself deceived: for, to tell the truth, I had taken a fancy to that little girl."

"Yes, sir, it is, as you say, a bad business; but, as far as I can see, there is only one course to take. Your property has been made away with, while in the girl's possession, and she refuses to give any account of it; that looks black against her; and if it was known to be passed over, it would have a bad effect on the other workpeople."

"Yes, so it might; but before we take further measures, we will go again to her lodging, and give her another trial."

"Very well, sir; but it's my opinion that you should have made sure of her as soon as it was found out. I shouldn't be surprised if she has given you the slip."

But, for once, Roberts was mistaken; they found the suspected culprit where they had left her. She did not seem to have any intention of eluding either justice or Mr. Ford.

"Theft! who says that Effie Lowe has anything to do with theft? I'd deny it till I was black in the face, let 'em be who they may!" This speech was from Effie's landlady, who had followed the gentlemen up-stairs, and seemed to guess their errand.

"My good woman, keep your place, and hold your tongue," Roberts responded, smoothing the crown of his sleek hat with a dignity which he meant to be strongly impressive.

"Speak out for yourself, Effie Lowe," said the more lenient master; "confess all you know about the missing property, and it shall not go hard with you; only tell me the truth."

The answer was given with faltering voice, and a drooping of the head, that might have passed for guilt, but for the look in her eyes. "I can tell nothing more than I have told already, sir."

Again he urged: "Come, speak out, for your own sake."

"I cannot! oh, if you would only trust me, sir, and let me pay it off by working for you!"

"A very likely story," struck in Roberts; but he was interrupted by a tramping, shuffling noise on the stairs. Another moment, and Effie's father appeared, supported between two men, and followed by a ragged retinue of wondering children, who beat a hasty retreat at sight of the woman of the house.

"The party has met with a haccident," explained one of the men; "been a bit light-headed, and slipped his foot, pitching down some arey steps; might have been a deal worse."

"Hush! my hurt is nothing; don't be frightened, Effie;" and her father dropped into the nearest chair. He understood the scene before him only too well.

Still, Mr. Ford continued to urge, and still Effie pleaded, with her little thin hands clasped together, and her great grey eyes fixed on his face.

"Well, I see you are determined to give me no explanation."

"I cannot, sir; oh, spare me!"

"Now, sir, you know there is but one course to take," said Roberts the cool and relentless. "She must be sent to prison; they will make her speak there."

"To prison!" She repeated the words with a gasp. The little ones, not knowing what it all meant, were crying and clinging to her dress.

She looked at them, and murmured, "Our

Father, who art in heaven, give them their daily bread."

"One more question, Effie Lowe. Did you steal it for yourself?"

"I did not steal it, sir. I would rather starve.

"Then can you tell us who did?"

"Yes, she can." It was her father who gave this unexpected answer. All eyes were turned on him. He rose from his seat with difficulty, helped by one of the men who had come in with him. "Yes, she knows that I stole it, though she will not put the guilt on me, even to save herself. God bless her! I did take the stuff, and pledged it, meaning to get it out the same day. She could not give me the money I wanted, so I took it when she was asleep. I know that I am a wretch, but I am not bad enough to let my child suffer in my place. Now you may send me to prison as soon as you like; I am good for nothing else."

But Mr. Ford did not send the man to prison, in spite of the sage logic of his confidential adviser, Roberts. He perversely turned aside from that fountain of worldly wisdom, and went his own way; acting the good Samaritan to the gambler's family, and indulging his own liking for the quaint little girl with the grey eyes, whose face he would not have liked to miss from his counter. The stolen property was easily recovered from the pawnbroker's, and the embroidery was eventually finished by Effie, who was not only trusted with more work, but helped on with much unexpected kindness from Mr. Ford. But his good work did not end there. For the faithful daughter's sake, he gave her father a chance to retrieve himself, by procuring him work at his own trade. The result enabled him to triumph over the cynical distrust of Roberts; for Edward Lowe did his best to redeem the past. And thus in due time the mother's dying prophecy was fulfilled; for Effie was the means of leading her erring father to a better life. They had a home once more, and the little ones, for whom she had prayed so often, did not want for their daily bread. This was the good that grew out of Effie's Trial.

ALTON CLYDE.

## LIFE IN DEATH.

**S**TRONG in her faith, she felt no torturing fears,  
No dark misgivings her last hours oppress;  
As full of love as she was full of years,  
The dear old grandame calmly sank to rest.

And when her body of this life was reft,  
A childlike sweetness sat upon her face,  
As her departing spirit there had left  
The sign and seal of Heaven's eternal grace.

No record kept of all the anxious strife,

The cares and troubles, that all mothers know;  
The triumphs only of her honest life  
Seemed writ upon the dear one's placid brow.

And when they bore her through bright flow'ry ways,  
Earth's last embrace, the common lot, to share,  
A lark o'erhead showered down such bursts of praise,  
It seemed as though her soul was singing there.

JOHN GEO. WATTS.



## THOUGHTS ON "THE BETRAYAL."

BY THE REV. R. SINCLAIR BROOKE, D.D.



HERE is not any character in sacred history which stands out against so dark a ground as that of Judas Iscariot. To the moral artist it is a complete study—painful and powerful—like the effect produced by those deep brown and tawny shadows, which abound in the grand but gloomy pictures of Rembrandt.

Contending Christian sects, however they may differ in other points, are consentaneous in affixing on this man the stigma of a unanimous reprobation. No doubt he suffers from contrast with those he is associated with in the Gospel narrative, and the strong light of their good qualities brings out his evil points into a bolder relief. Thus, his disloyalty darkens before the faithfulness of Peter; his treachery takes a deeper dye beside the devotedness of Thomas; his deadness of spirit waxes even more lifeless when placed beside the unhesitating alacrity of Matthew; his gloom is but more cloudily before the joy of Zaccheus; his reticence on divine things seems absolutely sinful, as we listen to the ardent aspiration of Philip; and his indifference to his Master's person and cause looks hateful in the light of the tender love of the Apostle John; while his whole being and bearing blacken to intensity, like a thunder-cloud when the sun is in the sky, if compared with the white and radiant spotlessness of that Divine Master, whom he sold for the price of a slave who had been gored by an ox, and whom he had betrayed to the vilest of deaths. He is further contrasted with Mary the sister of Lazarus, as they are found together in the house of Simon the leper, a few days before the crucifixion. Here was the Christ-loving saint, who chose the better part, anointing the Master's head and feet with ointment of great price; and here was the world-loving Judas demurring to its application and counting its cost: here was the disciple in heart, and principle, and in practice; and here was the disciple in name only and mere pretence: here was the gentle devotionist estimating all loss but as gain, so that she might cast her heart at the feet of her Saviour; and here was the calculating hypocrite, who followed for the loaves and fishes: here was Mary, dissolved in purest love for her God and her Redeemer; and here was Judas, hardened by the sordid love of *his* god, which was Mammon; for whatever might have been the other vices of this unhappy man, avarice appears to have gained a mastery, and been his ruling passion, small, perhaps, at first, like a mustard seed—when, awakened by the preaching of John the

Baptist, or drawn by his own Messianic speculations, or softened by the marvellous and "gracious words" of Him who spake as never man spake, he left his calling to follow Jesus. But all vices, when not cut down, like base weeds, have rapid growth, and none more than covetousness, which hardens on the surface of the heart, like the increasing and indurating bark of a tree. This sordid feeling found scope and occasion for growth and exercise by Judas's function among the apostles, in that he had the bag, and, receiving the offerings, was purveyor and steward to the rest. Probably he had a talent for business, and even *this* faculty, when uncontrolled and unregulated by Divine grace, might have helped on his temptation to his ruin; for it is plain that when once a dominant passion gets possession of the heart, how strong is its sway, and how it works its onward course, irrespective of consequences, blind to reasoning, and turning a deaf ear to all remonstrances from friends, as well as to all monitions from conscience.

And yet how frequent were his warnings from the lip of Wisdom—from the tongue of Him, whom his own confession afterwards, breathed in all the sincerity of his despair, pronounced to be "innocent." Judas must have listened to the pointed allusions to "cares of this world and deceitfulness of riches" which our Lord more than once expatiated on. He must have heard the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; and the proverb of the camel and the needle's eye; and seen the discomfiture of the young ruler, and our Lord's deduction from the fact of his having great riches. Surely his heart must have been hardened by the influence of this ignoble passion when these warnings affected him not; and when in the absence of all sense of generosity, delicacy of feeling, or truth in his soul, he suffered his Saviour to kneel before him, and wash his feet; and afterwards, at the last supper, bore the heavy woe denounced by Jesus against his betrayer, not only with hard inflexibility, but with an audacity in his hypocrisy not usual with the worst criminals, he joined with the other apostles in the questioning cry of "Master, is it I?"

Surely it is a great mystery, our Lord's choice of Judas to be among "the twelve beloved sheep." His election in this case to the apostleship, from which he "by transgression fell," was official; yet our Lord knew from the beginning "who it was that should betray him," and must, more or less, have distrusted Judas, and entertained for him what a learned orthodox critic calls a "singular antipathy." Perhaps Judas, at the time of the

mission of the Twelve, was but entering on the first beginnings of his sin; "no one," says the Latin proverb, "is very base on a sudden." Indubitably our Lord, in his charge to his apostles, classes him with the sheep whom he was sending among wolves; and also with "the little ones," "a hair of whose head was not to perish," and makes him partaker of his promises of support and favour, and endows him with power to teach, and preach, and speak through the Spirit, and to heal diseases, and cast out devils. How wonderful—how inexplicable is all this! yet we shall see its meaning when we shall attain our rest, when God's doings will be justified by the light of heaven; and when, no longer beholding through a glass darkly, we shall see face to face, and shall know even as we are known.

It is for Faith to accept as verities the apparent difficulties of Revelation, and not to permit an unsanctified, and oftentimes pretentious criticism to rend the whole web asunder, because of what may appear to be a few dark spots in the fabric: yet friendly criticism is always welcome; and new and original views, when reverently expressed, invest the Word of God with a livelier interest. Thus the complexities which appear in the life of Judas are attempted to be solved, with great ingenuity, by certain German writers, in whose wake the late learned Archbishop Whately has followed, and their elucidation is somewhat of the following form:—Not through malice, or the love of money, but with a desire to hasten, and, as it were, to force on the manifestation of the kingdom of Israel in the person of Jesus, in which, doubtless, Judas himself, as an apostle, would take high place. This was his policy and scheme, and to carry it out he became a traitor. With this view, ambition was with him a stronger feeling than avarice. The thirty pieces of silver—under five pounds of our money—could be no equivalent for so much base treachery. Perhaps, too, when his Master said to him at the last supper, "What thou doest, do quickly," Jesus must have understood and approved of his intention. Good must come of his apprehension, for then he would be *compelled* to show forth his royalty and power; and no harm could possibly result; for was not his power absolute? and had not Judas seen him command the wind and waves, cast out devils, and raise the dead? But when he saw his Master's meek surrender, and how he kept in abeyance all the divine energies which would have liberated him personally, and exalted him, amidst an admiring people, to the throne of his father David, then remorse, and bitter disappointment, and wounded pride, and shame, all acting on a mind already

weakened by crime, overwhelmed him with despair, and he went out and hanged himself.

This very ingenious view seems incompatible with our idea of Judas as an ignorant man; such a far-seeing and subtle policy could scarce proceed from a rude and uneducated mind, and is not in keeping or consistent with the pettiness of the faults recorded of him. Our Lord calls him "a devil:" a strong term; and again he uses, if possible, a more condemnatory term, "the son of perdition;" and the Apostle Peter applies to him the awful prophecies of Psalms lxi. and cix., and deliberately pronounces his doom in saying, "He went to his own place."

If his sin had only been ambition, and a mistaken zeal for the manifestation of Messiah's kingdom on earth, could our Lord have so classified him with demons, and would he not rather have prayed for him, as he prayed for Peter, who denied him thrice; and forgiven him, as he forgave the other apostles, who all forsook him and fled?

These questions are delicate, and should be put with humility and deepest reverence. And yet, perhaps, it would be more profitable, in bringing this sketch to a conclusion, to ask our own hearts, Do we, while professing horror at Judas's conduct, ever walk in his steps and follow his example? We all acknowledge Christ, and are named by his name. If, then, our lives be a libel on our name of Christians, and on *his* name from whom we are called, do we not betray him as false professors? If we grudge him our worship—by open neglect of his house, his Book, and his table, and by our dispractice of family and private prayer—what do we better than Judas, when, in a stinting spirit, he would have withheld Mary's hand from paying honour, and worship, and fealty to her Lord? Do we not thus betray Christ by unobservant neglect? If we spend all our means to secure for ourselves the pleasures of the body, the objects of taste, or the gauds and luxuries of the world—which thousands are in the habit of doing—and refuse our money to further God's work or to help God's poor, what are we, nominal Christians as we are, better than he, the traitor, who cared not for the poor, but who sold his Master and his own hope of salvation for a few pieces of silver? And last, and worst stage of all—are there no false ones in the Church, who wear a mask, and make a gain of their godliness?—are there no hypocrites, whose heart is far from God, yet draw nigh to Jesus and kiss him, with the cry, "Hail, Master!" and do so habitually, often for their whole lifetime? And what are these better than a betraying Judas?

"ROUND THE COURT."

BY A RENT-COLLECTOR.

A BAD BEGINNING.



"**T**HAT'S a bad beginning," I answered, unadvisedly, to the torrent of complaint which ground floor No. 2 poured out against her eldest son, who had married within the week, and had not said anything about it till it was an accomplished fact.

The mother thought herself ill-used, and with justice. "He took care to be no good to us," she had said; "after all we had done for him. The first week he gets journeyman's wages he sets off and marries; and he'll never look near us again, like enough, or give us a penny to keep us from starving."

"That's a bad beginning," I had ventured to say.

"Well, as for that," replied the mother, evidently resenting the remark, and showing an inclination to turn her wrath into a fresh channel, "his father did the same before him."

"Oh! that makes a difference," I answered, meekly.

"To be sure it does," assented the mother; "but as for her"—thus designating her daughter-in-law—"the good-for-nothing baggage, I'll give her a bit of my mind, if ever I set eyes on her."

"Have you never seen the young woman then?" I asked.

"No, not I indeed. He met her at one of the singing saloons. His sister saw them there; but she wouldn't take no notice of the likes of her."

"Do your daughters go to the singing saloons too?" I inquired, rather gravely, for she answered with a toss of the head.

"My Lizzie has a young man who comes to the house, respectable, and he often treats her to a little hout, besides standing something when they come home. He's the right sort, he is."

"A bad beginning indeed," I thought to myself, as I turned away. That newly-married boy and girl will spend all their earnings in what they call pleasure—in eating, and drinking, and "houting," making no provision for the time of need. Then will come babies and other burdens, poverty and peevishness, selfish indulgence and selfish neglect, and a loveless and unlovely home, which will be deserted as soon as its brood can fly.

The bait of sensual pleasure is the cruellest temptation to the children of toil. As for the singing saloons, and similar places of amusement, they are not the innocent recreations some people with a spurious liberality would make believe. It is a cruel kindness which pleads for their use,

on the ground that the lives of working men and women are hard, and need the relief of a little pleasurable excitement. The lives of working men and women are hard, and snatching at such relief only makes them harder. Their true happiness is not to be reached without enduring the hardness first. If they take their pleasure first, they have forestalled their happiness, and the result is bitter suffering.

A terrible reproach stands written against the working classes by one who knew them well, and laboured among them as a minister of Christ. "I know, who have seen them in their best and worst conditions," wrote Edward Irving, "and am bold to declare that in general parents make gain of their children, and children seek to be rid of their parents." And the reproach is echoed by many, who say, "The want of family affection and helpfulness is very rare among people who are better off. Look how the members of a middle-class family hang together; how the young men will put off marriage for years, to save their sisters from the hardship of going out into the world; how the father will toil, till his very brain gives way, to bring up his children; how the whole family will pinch and strive together, to give superior advantages to one more promising than the rest." What is it that makes the difference? Their reward in a worldly sense is higher; but it is not that. It is because, in the old never-ending warfare between the flesh and the spirit, the "better off" have a vantage ground; the poor are in the front of the fight. Their self-denial must be closer and more constant, their endurance more patient, and their conflict more severe. What is simple comfort to the former, is indulgence to the latter: and what in the former would be only a slight indulgence, becomes in the latter a repulsive selfishness.

And in the assent of the foolish mother to the random words which turned away her wrath, there was another and deeper meaning than she knew. The rule of selfishness once set up in a family is difficult to overthrow. If one is selfish by nature, the others become selfish in self-defence; and so it goes on, till some noble spirit breaks the bondage, and stays the plague by pure self-sacrifice.

Bad beginnings often go back for generations. In the present instance, the father had eaten sour grapes, and his children's teeth were set on edge. He was by trade a carver and gilder, and, though he was not and never had been vicious, he was vain and self-indulgent. He had the misfortune to take it into his head that he was born not to

frame other people's pictures, but to paint pictures for other people to frame. It seemed to him easier to paint pictures than to frame them, and more gentlemanlike too; and he prided himself on looking like a gentleman. Had he not seen the great Sir J. G— dash in a beautiful blue coat, buttons and all, or fold on fold of gorgeous drapery, covering half the canvas, while he waited in his studio? So he came to London, the goal of genius, leaving a mother and sister in his native town. He never wrote to them, for they needed help, and he had nothing to spare from the demands of his genius and taste, which he thought he ought to foster at all hazards. Then he married a showy vulgar girl, and taking up his trade at home, gave art a trial at the same time. He painted wonderful landscapes, in which a poisonous green predominated, and where impossible shadows rested upon solid water, in which there was always a remarkable red-roofed house, and a compartment of clouds that resembled boiled dumplings as much as anything else. Strange to say, they sold in some numbers. He framed them showily, and they made a rather grand ornament for ambitious housewives. He painted his wife's portrait, and then persuaded a fair neighbour to sit for hers. But when it was finished, the lady indignantly denied the likeness, and refused payment of the stipulated fee, and so the picture remained in the hands of the painter, and was hung up opposite his wife's, and held to be a masterpiece of art. There it sat, a dismal ashy hue overspreading the deathlike face and hands; and under the chin a horrible dark patch, which, with the stare in the eyes, pointed to strangulation as the cause of the decease. I am not sure that it did not appear at the South London Working Men's Exhibition—one of those pictures concerning which Mr. Layard spoke so frankly, telling their painters that they must go to school to learn the very first elements of form and colour. At length the would-be artist had to turn to his trade for the support of his growing family; and though not a good workman, he managed to get along with the help of his wife, who was both strong and hardworking. The eldest boy was apprenticed to a printer, and was a clever lad enough. The girls were set to work by their mother, as soon as they could hold their needles; and the youngest boy was packed off to any shiftless, unskilled task which would bring in the most money.

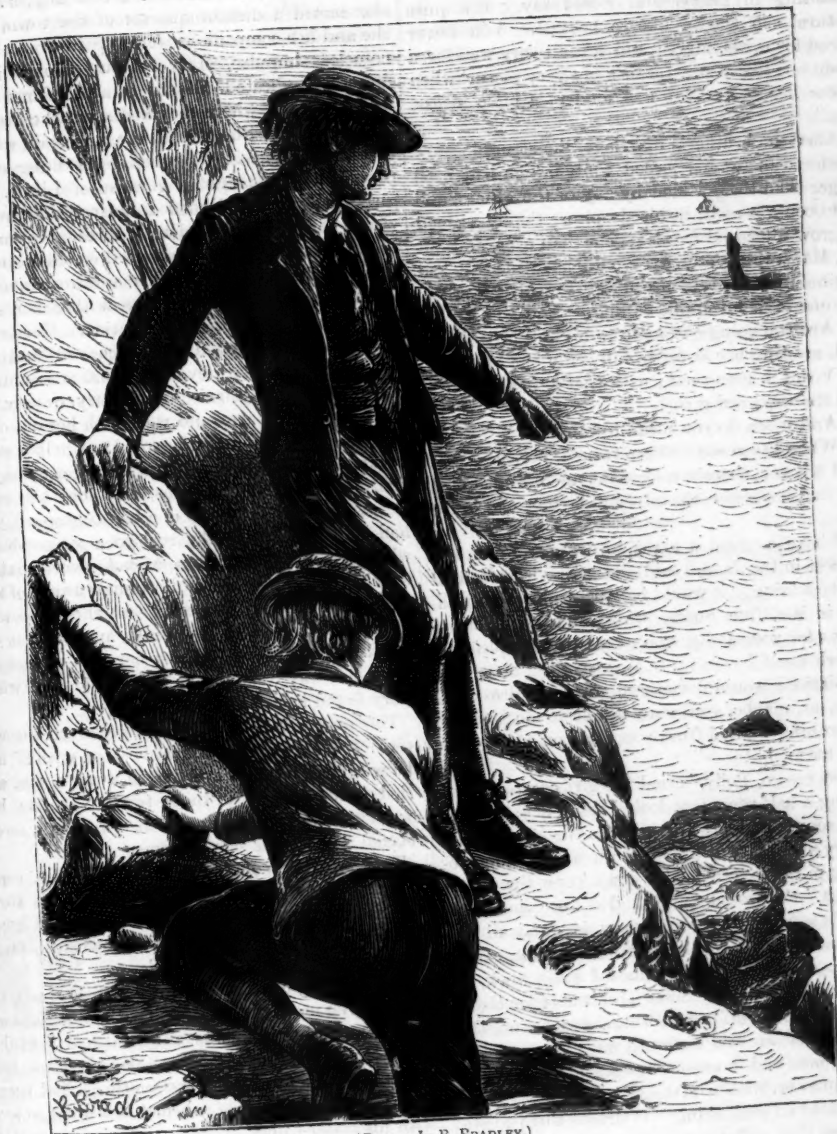
When the family came to live in the court, its principal dependence was on the children's earnings. The father's trade—a wretchedly fluctuating one, as all trades of mere luxury are—was bad. He was failing in health, for it is also unwholesome, owing more to the filthy condition of the workshops than to anything else, and consequently he was oftener out of work than in it.

Neither wife—nor with one exception—children scrupled to show the poor half-broken-down fellow how small account they made of him. Mary, his first and favourite child, a plain, silent, and rather harsh-looking young woman, looked upon her father with unwavering faith and admiration, as the first of men, and loved and served him heartily. She and her second sister, Lizzie, worked at a sort of sewing-factory, earning each about seven shillings a week, and sometimes more for overtime. The youngest worked at home with her mother; but they could not earn much more than seven shillings between them. Father and mother and grown-up daughters all slept in one room, in beds laid out on the floor at night, while the two lads slept in a bed in the kitchen. The oldest, still an apprentice, earned from ten to fifteen shillings a week, and the youngest generally got five or six.

Sophia, the youngest girl, who was about sixteen, was sickly and peevish. She seldom went beyond the entrance of the court, and would hang about, idle and untidy, while her mother went home with their work, and got a fresh supply. Very often, when Mary got home in the evening, she found Sophy standing there, and the work which she ought to have finished, still undone; and when Mary remonstrated, the mother would say, "Well, I'm sure, it's very hard in a strong one like you to grudge the poor thing a bit o' rest. It don't agree with her, the sitting don't. She was always delicate. Before she was done nursing, I had to tempt her to eat with a bit o' bacon, or red herring, I had." Then Mary would look at the white, fretful face, and she would take up the neglected work, and her fingers would fly as fast as her mother's tongue, and that was hard to follow.

Lizzie was of another spirit, and would not "be put upon," as she called it. By refusing to give any help at home, except for a consideration, she had more to spend upon herself than the others. She would claim every farthing owing to her for work done at home, and deduct it from the stipulated weekly sum which she paid to her parents. All the out-door workers adopted this plan, and spent what remained of their earnings in their own fashion. It was not more than the girls needed for clothing, but it sometimes left a dangerous surplus in the pockets of the eldest son. Lizzie would work hard, that she might dress gaily; but when there was any deficiency in the general fund, neither she nor her brother would supply it; and the one would not because the other would not, till even Mary resented having to make it up, simply because she had denied herself. She could deny herself, but she did not like to indulge others. Thus strife and selfishness increased among them every day. The





(Drawn by E. BRADLEY.)

"Thus higher hour by hour they climbed."—p. 587.

skirmishes usually ended in Mary's defeat; for Lizzie was bold, and, moreover, she was beautiful, and the silly mother was pleased to see her flaunting in finery, and would say, "It's quite natural she should like to be fine. You never cared for dress, Mary; and it's all very well for a plain one like you. Lizzie's my very pictur' when I was her age, and I was fond of a bit o' dress, too."

After the brother's marriage, the struggle grew harder still, for his forced contribution had been larger than that yielded by any of the others, and had been a benefit, in his despite. Sophy seemed to grow idler and Lizzie gayer than ever, and but for Mary, the giddy girl would have made a bad beginning indeed—a beginning to which there is but one most miserable ending.

"Are you going out again to-night, Lizzie?" she said, meeting her sister in full array one evening.

"Yes, I'm going out; and what's that to you?" said the wayward girl.

"And when do you mean to come in?"

"When I'm ready," she returned, pertly.

"I tell you, there'll no good come of your goin's on," said her sister, sharply, and laying hold of her arm.

"I have as good a right to dress and dance as the best in the land," said the girl, with a defiant laugh; adding, "it would be hard to have no pleasure in life, like Sophy, who won't work for it; and, as for you, Polly, you seem to take pleasure in work itself."

"Lizzie, I would never grudge you to dress and dance, as, maybe, you were meant to do, if there was nothing wanted from you, and you could come to no harm, but——"

"Let me go, Polly," cried the girl, escaping, and flinging a half-repentant look behind her; "I'll be home soon!" and she hurried into the street.

Mary's views of life were stern and uncompromising in the extreme. "I don't know the meaning of it," she would say; "I don't see the use of it. It's work, work, work, every day, and all day long, and for nothing that I can make out, except to keep on working. But since I must work, I'll keep at it till I drop. Some aren't able for that—the worse for them." And to the suggestion, that the use of labour and suffering was often visible in making men and women stronger and holier, she would answer, with a strange vehemence, "I tell you it does no such thing. It drives them to sin; and then they suffer for that again, and it makes them worse and worse."

About her sister's companions, Mary had misgivings; and on the night of the little encounter related, by some instinct of affection, they became so strong that she could not rest at home. She rose and went to the house of one of them who lived in the neighbourhood. It was already late,

and while she was there the girl came in. Mary asked if her sister had gone home, and the girl answered, No: she had left her at supper. And she named a distant quarter of the town, where she and her companions were. Still urged by her nameless impulse, Mary set out at once in the direction indicated, till she came in front of the flaring "Hall," where they had spent the first part of the evening. She stood there, uncertain whether to enter, when, in the vivid light flung on the pavement, she caught a glimpse of Lizzie. The girl came up and leaned against the lamp-post, with a sob, which immediately arrested one or two of the passers-by. A little crowd would soon have gathered, but Mary was at her side in a moment. It was some time before she saw that her sister was in a state of partial intoxication. Her tawdry dress was disarranged, her face red and tear-stained, and her dark eyes wild and unmeaning.

"Come home, Lizzie," said Mary, quietly, and the girl took her arm, and went with her out of the light without a word. She could not help a stifled groan, as she felt the girl's unsteady gait; and then Lizzie broke forth in sobs, and told her story. It was only the first step of a bad beginning. She had adjourned with the rest to a supper-house, where she was treated to some hot, sweet mixture, which went to her head. Becoming aware of this, and happily losing her temper at the same time, she had quarrelled with the rest, and run out into the street, where she had lost herself, and had just found her way back to the blazing "Hall," where Mary found her.

The only words the latter uttered on the way were: "You're a disgrace to be seen with!" and the wild girl would have darted away again, and tried to lose herself in those terrible streets, but for the strong grip on her arm, which was never relaxed till she was safe at home.

This incident somewhat sobered Lizzie, especially as Mary covered her retreat with a stern kindness, so that the late hour and the bad headache, and the tears, were all set down to Lizzie's quarrel with "her young man."


The winding-up of this family history was very rapid. The mother died somewhat suddenly, and, foolish as she was, it was she who had held the home together. Mary tried to take her place, but her rule was not so lax as the mother's had been, and the younger brother rebelled, and went to live with his sister-in-law, whose gay time was coming to an end. Within a few months Lizzie married; and the fretful Sophy, who had taken a turn in favour of tidiness, under her sister's rule, followed her example. Mary took a situation, and bribed Lizzie with more than half her wages, to take the more and more useless father into her house. Like the old king of the poet, he tried them all by turns; but there was no room for him in their

mean and miserable dwellings, and their equally mean and miserable spirits did not scruple to make him feel that he was one too many there.

To him whose only birthright is toil, home, when it is a happy one, is the centre of all his happiness, the source of all his enjoyments. For it he lives and labours. It sends him to his toil with a strong heart and a vigorous arm, and opens smiling to receive him to his rest. Nothing can compensate to the working man for the want of affection there. Poverty is ever ready to come in at any breach made in its defences; and destitute of true attachment, it is destitute indeed. Sickness and trial may overtake him, and he may not be able to guard against the entrance of poverty; but affection can take from these half their bitterness; and in the midst of privation, a heroism has been practised, which, even if it were not too

sacred, it would be impossible to disclose. It could not be written how greatly men may act concerning things so small. But in the atmosphere of selfishness attachment perishes; the flower of affection will not grow in the midst of all that is unlovely and unlovable—in the midst of sordid habits and jarring tempers. Therefore, it is well to bring to bear on the households of the poor all that can refine the manners and soften the heart. But there is only one influence which takes from poverty all its sordidness, which yields a refinement higher than wealth or education can bestow. That influence is the religion of Christ—of him who was the child, the companion, the friend of the poor. By its aid, the poor man can make his home so happy that his children shall not wish, and so holy that they shall not dare, to cast it from their hearts. (To be continued.)

## HIGHER.

WO boys stood on a rocky ledge—  
Two boys of spirit brave;  
And at their feet, in the summer heat,  
Lay cradled the sleepy wave.  
And many a gold and silver back  
Lay glittering where they trod;  
While the baited bribe of the finny tribe  
Danced to the skilful rod.

"Now, sure and steady must we climb,  
For fast returns the tide;  
And much I fear we may not here  
In safety long abide;


For look," the elder boy exclaimed,  
"How deep that gulf below.  
Now where's the stone we stood upon  
But half an hour ago?"

Thus higher hour by hour they climbed,  
Till Time's great clock the while  
Pointed its golden-sceptred hand  
Across the ocean's dial.  
And ever upwards may they strive,  
When earthly footings fail;  
Where time, nor change, nor chances strange  
Can ever more prevail.

## THE HALF-SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DEEPDALE VICARAGE," "MARK WARREN," ETC.

## CHAPTER XXI.

WO letters for Sophy," cried her uncle, Mr. Hector Chillingham, one morning, as Sophy came down to breakfast.

It was now a week since the great Chillingham "cram" had taken place, and the back parlour, in which the family were assembled, had been restored to its original shabbiness.

"Cover up the things, and let us get back to our old habits," had been said, with a sigh of untold relief, by Mr. Chillingham. But it was not the custom of Mrs. Chillingham to allow the ripple on the surface to subside quite so soon.

She might have callers in the wake of this grand party, especially after the bringing out of Sophy, the youthful and fortunate owner of ten thousand a year. Who knows but the carriage of the Cransteads might not stop at her door?

It was politic, therefore, to allow the drawing-room furniture to see the light a little longer. At this very moment a fire was being kindled behind the bright steel bars, ready to cheer the heart of any one who might pay his or her respects to Mrs. Hector Chillingham.

Mrs. Chillingham, to do her justice, had Sophy's interest thoroughly at heart—that is, what *she* considered to be Sophy's interest. When her husband, tired, and considerably out of pocket by the night's pomp and show, had said to her, in a querulous tone, "It's a vast deal of trouble, Rachel, and a great expense; I hardly think I can stand it again," Rachel replied, with one of her grim smiles, "But, my dear, there's Sophy! we have Sophy to establish."

Sophy, meantime, was reading her letter—she had only opened one at present—with sparkling eyes.

"Oh, aunt! what do you think?—that delightful Mrs. Cranstead has written to ask me to go there!"

"Indeed, Sophy," said Mrs. Chillingham, with a touch of secret exultation.

"Yes, aunt. She says she shall call in her carriage about two o'clock, and take me back with her, if you will allow. Will you, aunt? Oh, I am sure you will!"

"We shall see," replied Mrs. Hector, thinking with calm satisfaction of her splendid drawing-room, and the fire flashing behind the steel bars. "Who is the other letter from, Sophy?"

"The other letter"—and Sophy's face assumed an expression of reluctance and dislike—"is from Mrs. Trentham."

"Well, and what does she say?"

"Oh, aunt! pray don't insist upon it," cried Sophy, in a tone of extreme distaste, "but she wants me to go there."

"When, my dear?"

"Not till Tuesday. Oh, I am so glad! If I go to the abbey, I cannot be in two places at once," cried Sophy, gleefully.

"We shall see, Sophy. Perhaps Mrs. Cranstead may not want you to stay so long."

"Oh, but she does. She says a few weeks. There is the letter, aunt. I should so like to go!"

"And you shall go," interposed her uncle, decidedly. "It's a fine thing for such a chit as you to be asked by the lady of Cranstead. You must play your cards well, Sophy, and then there's no knowing what may not come to pass."

"But I don't know how to play at cards, uncle," replied Sophy, in a tone of great simplicity; "poor dear papa would never let me learn."

"Bless your innocent heart, my darling! I don't mean spades, and aces, and trumps, and those sort of things. I mean—but there, never mind," added he, seeing the perplexity of Sophy's countenance; "you'll get your wisdom soon enough, I dare say. At any rate, get your breakfast."

The Chillinghams breakfasted early, so there was ample time for making the necessary arrangements. By two o'clock Sophy's clothes were packed, and Mrs. Chillingham was sitting in state to receive her visitor. She was sitting in a stiff, uncomfortable attitude, her hands in her lap. She had no aptitude for the elegant employments of the drawing-room. Her worsted and her shears could hardly be admitted here. As for Sophy, in a state of unusual excitement, she was fluttering from one window to another, looking out for the carriage of the Cransteads.

At length it came, with its cream-coloured horses, its coachman on the box, its crest, and its footmen in livery standing behind. A handsome "turn-out" was that of the lady of Cranstead, but rarely did she use it. It was at least three years since she had done Mrs. Hector Chillingham the honour of calling upon her. She looked very distinguished, Sophy thought, in her velvet shawl, trimmed with the costliest sable, and her close-fitting bonnet, with its plume of handsome feathers. Mrs. Cranstead never absolutely followed the fashions; she seemed rather to study what became her as an individual.

There was a stateliness and a coldness in her manner to Mrs. Chillingham, but this gave place to an expression of kindly interest as her eye rested on Sophy.

Drawing the girl towards her, she again kissed her fair young forehead, saying, with an accent that was almost caressing, "You are ready to come with me, Sophy."

"Sophy is quite ready. I think you do her great honour," interposed Mrs. Chillingham, in a tone meant to be extremely cordial.

The mistress of Cranstead bowed her stately head, by way of reply. Then she whispered to Sophy, "Get your bonnet on, my dear, if you please."

Away flew Sophy, all eagerness to get to the charmed precincts of the abbey.

She was but sixteen, and nearly the whole of that time she had been motherless. Her mother had died when Sophy was an infant, and she had been brought up under the fostering care of the best and the kindest of fathers. From Sophy's father, a rich banker, she inherited her fortune—a fortune he had taught her to view in a totally different light from that in which fortunes were regarded by the Chillingham clique.

"You are but the steward, Sophy," he had said, "of the good things God has given you. It must never be said of you, 'I was hungry, and ye fed me not; sick, and ye visited me not.' The poor, Sophy, you have always with you."

"Money should be used to get money, and position too, Sophy," had said the hard, cutting voice of Mrs. Chillingham.

Sophy had seen very little of her own sex. Her aunt she shrank from, and her aunt's friends were equally distasteful to her. No noble and beautiful lady, such as Mrs. Cranstead, had ever stooped over her and kissed her forehead; and a thrill of deep affection stirred in the young girl's heart.

"I love her!—oh, how I love her!" repeated she, as with eager fingers she tied on her bonnet, all the dear delights of her Cranstead visit looming pleasantly in the distance. "I should like to stay all my life at the abbey."

Ah! Sophy, young, enthusiastic, and inexperienced, did it never occur to you that even the abbey might contain a skeleton?

The lady of Cranstead did not prolong her visit more than was decently polite, after the return of Sophy to the drawing-room. Very soon the carriage with its appendages was rolling away from the mansion of the Chillinghams.

Mrs. Cranstead and Sophy sat side by side, and Mrs. Cranstead held Sophy's hand in hers. It was evident that some strong emotion of interest was stirred in the cold, isolated heart of the lady of the abbey.

Sophy, on her part, was supremely happy. The society of this dear lady, the absence of those influences which had made her life, of late, so dreary—the consciousness of sympathy, of liberty, of power to act independently of the cold, hard rules of the



Chillinghams, presented itself to her in a seductive light. Never once did she call to mind Archibald Cranstead.

The carriage had to traverse nearly the whole of the city, for Cranstead Abbey lay some distance on the other side. At one of the shops in the principal street in Workstone Mrs. Cranstead told Sophy to pull the check-string.

"I have an errand to do, my dear. Perhaps you will sit in the carriage till I come back."

Sophy had no kind of objection. She disliked shopping, and it amused her to watch the people passing and repassing on the pavement. It was the busiest and most populous time of the day just then. She had not watched long, before her face began to glow like crimson, and her heart to flutter with a new but pleasant sensation. At a distance, coming briskly along, was—yes, certainly it must be—Mr. Kingston. She recognised him in a moment. She would have recognised him among a thousand! But would he see her? She had let down the glass of the window, the better to amuse herself with her observations. Now her pretty youthful face was thrust eagerly out. She could see him quite plainly. What a kind, benevolent countenance he had! He was very near to her; surely, he would not pass without a word. Not for a long time had Sophy's heart so yearned as it did for a look, a smile from this stranger—a stranger whom she had only seen once in her life.

But he did not pass her. Walking briskly along, he caught sight, first, of a pair of cream-coloured horses, their reins in the hands of a staid old coachman on the box. Then his eye fell on the carriage and crest of the Cransteads, and as a natural consequence, on a young wistful face at the window, and on a gloved hand, put out impulsively, and yet with an air of timidity, towards him. He knew the face in a moment, and he stopped and raised his hat. His kind, benignant eyes had a look of interest, blended with amusement, as, seeing that she expected it, he came up to the window, and gave the impulsive little hand a cordial shake.

"I am glad to have the pleasure of seeing you again, Miss Hensman. I hope you are well."

"Quite well, thank you," replied Sophy, blushing at her own eagerness, and conscious of a real abstract pleasure in the fact of being spoken to and looked at by Mr. Kingston.

"I have been wishing for an opportunity of telling you how much the poor people we were speaking of the other day are indebted to your liberality. Your name has been blessed again and again, Miss Hensman."

"Has it?" said Sophy, joyfully, the tender chord within her vibrating at the sound of the words.

"It has, indeed. Your generous donation—"

"Oh, never mind that! I did not miss the money, and that is hardly true charity, is it?" asked Sophy, simply.

He smiled. It was evident he was too much in haste to discuss the point. He added a few hurried

words instead, in which he told her that the subscription had exceeded his expectations, and that the poor houseless people were saved from destitution. Then, wishing her good morning, he again raised his hat courteously, and passed on.

Sophy withdrew from the window, and leaned back on her seat. She felt no desire to look out any more. The day, she thought, had grown very bleak and chill, and the whole aspect of things changed.

Mr. Kingston, she could perceive, had no special interest in her. It might be a long time before she saw him again, if indeed she ever did. "Ah," sighed Sophy, in her inexperience and vague unrest, "I wish I was poor instead of rich, then perhaps he might—"

She did not finish the sentence. Mrs. Cranstead had returned.

## CHAPTER XXII.

It was striking four by the clock in the porter's lodge when the carriage turned into the great iron gates, and went under the noble arch of ivy, which had been trained from one elm to another.

Sophy was now in the immediate precincts of the abbey.

Yonder stood the fine old building, with its ancient buttresses, its time-honoured arches spanning the doorways, its oriel window, in what had once been the chapel, and on the stained glass of which the setting sun—for the sun did shine that day—was streaming with a gold and purple radiance. There were the matchless cedars, spreading their branches over nothing but a snow-wreath. There was the broad terrace before the house. Six carriages and horses might, and, it was said, once did, drive up and down it. There was the celebrated stone archway over the front door, and, carved above it, the well-known sword sheathed, and the device of the Cransteads. But the device, and the sword too, were young in years, as compared to the lovely tracery on the archway. The device did not date earlier than the reign of bluff King Henry VIII.; the archway had looked proudly down some centuries before then.

By this time the carriage had stopped, and the mistress of the abbey had alighted, and said to Sophy, with a smile, "Welcome to Cranstead, my dear;" and then they both stepped forward into the entrance hall.

Just as they did so, and Sophy, to whom everything was new and delightful, was looking round at the painted ceiling (also of modern date), and the stags' heads, with their branching antlers, which were hung up as trophies of the hunt, and all the various novelties which met her eye—just as she did so, a door opened at the further end of the hall. Through the door, and leaving it open, for his dogs to follow him, there entered a young man, in a shooting-jacket, his gun over his shoulder, and a velvet cap on his head. Sophy knew him in a moment, and her lip curled with a kind of gentle defiance.

It was Archibald Cranstead.

He just glanced at the ladies, and gave a careless

nod, without, however, removing his cap, or attempting any kind of courtesy. Indeed, he continued to whistle, as though nobody was present.

There came into Mrs. Cranstead's face one of those flushes of pain and annoyance which such little incidents—often occurring, alas!—were apt to call forth. As for Sophy, she assumed, what she felt, an air of profound and scornful indifference.

"The most odious young man I ever met with in my life," thought she.

"Archibald," said Mrs. Cranstead, her face still flushed, "this is Miss Hensman."

"I see, mother. How d'y'e do, Miss Hensman? I'm in a terrific hurry!" returned Archibald, carelessly; and, giving another hasty nod, he passed out of the front door, his cap untouched, and his dogs at his heels.

Mrs. Cranstead looked after him a moment, a cloud of deep sorrow coming over her features.

Yes, in the very first instance, had Sophy caught sight of the skeleton!

Two servants had by this time advanced to receive their mistress. One was the faithful Martha, the other was a young girl, whose business it would be to attend on Sophy. Then Mrs. Cranstead turned to her visitor. There was an air of weariness about her, that had come on quite suddenly—that languid, listless expression for which she had become noted. How well Sophy could understand it!

"Sophy, my dear, Jane will show you to your room, and help you dress. We shall dine at five. Good-bye for the present."

And she dismissed her with a smile, in which melancholy was now the predominant ingredient. Sophy left her standing at the foot of the stairs, looking pale and wan, and as if lacking the strength to ascend them, without the assistance of the faithful Martha.

"Yet she has been so cheerful," thought Sophy, "and did not seem tired in the least. It is all because of that odious son!" and, with a touch of bitterness, Sophy remembered his sulky attentions to her at Mrs. Chillingham's party.

Sophy's habits were simple as those of a recluse. She and her father had had but few wants, and certainly no unnecessary luxuries. His health had been feeble, and he had cared little for society. His daughter had spent most of her time in attending upon him. Two servants had composed their modest establishment. It had been a popular complaint against Sophy's father that he did not live up to his income. In fact—though the world knew it not—a considerable portion of that income was spent in private charity. At all events, Sophy was no fine lady. Her flaxen curls and simple toilette were indebted to no hands but her own for their effect. The idea of a lady's maid had never even occurred to her.

When she was ushered into the quaint old-fashioned room, with its fine oak panelling,—when she saw the elegance and beauty of everything around her, and when she knew that all she had to do was to sit in the comfortable chair, before the great cheval glass, and have her clothes unpacked, and her toilette com-

pleted, without any care or trouble of her own, she felt a certain amount of pleasurable sensations. At her Aunt Chillingham's, grand as the house looked, Sophy had not found it very comfortable. She had slept in a little barely-furnished room over the back parlour. It was characteristic of the Chillingham mansion, that all its best apartments were kept for show. But this beautiful place, how different it was! How bright, how warm, how luxurious, how completely elegant!

"I am afraid I shall be spoiled," thought Sophy, as, leaning back, she watched the maid arranging the pretty flaxen tresses—Sophy's greatest ornament—in the most approved style and fashion.

When the important business of the toilette was over, and every article belonging to it put neatly away, the girl retired, and Sophy was for the first time alone. Then she got up, and stood a few minutes looking at herself in the glass. She was nicely dressed. She wore a new gown that her aunt had given her, and had insisted should supplant the silk and crape. It was a black tarletan, and had trimmings of ribbon, a great innovation, Sophy thought, and had resisted it with all her might. Instead of the jet necklace, she wore a slender gold chain, with a locket containing her father's hair, and which she valued more than any other possession. Altogether, she looked what Mrs. Chillingham would have called her best. Her cheek was flushed a little with nervous excitement. She had scarcely seen the squire, and she was afraid of strangers. She did not dare to quit the sanctuary of her room, without the guardianship and countenance of the mistress of the abbey.

This, however, was soon forthcoming. There was a gentle tap, then the door opened. It was Mrs. Cranstead come to take her to the drawing-room.

She had recovered her spirits, apparently, at least. The cloud was gone, and her eyes beamed on Sophy with all their wonted affection. Very stately she looked in her dress of *moiré antique*, with a long rustling train, and a shawl of black lace thrown over her shoulders. She had dressed for dinner, in honour of her young guest.

Two persons were in the drawing-room. Squire Cranstead stood on the hearth-rug, as if lost in the contemplation of a splendid bank of red-hot cinders, the perfection of a winter night's fire. In an easy chair close by, lolling carelessly, a newspaper before him, was Archibald. He had, however, been sufficiently gracious to change his dress. Indeed, he considered that, since the last outbreak, he was behaving remarkably well. He did not rise when Sophy entered. He merely glanced at her from behind the paper.

The squire came forward with the utmost cordiality. His genial eye, and pleasant smile, set Sophy at ease in a moment. She did not condescend to look at Archibald.

At this moment the great gong in the hall began to sound its usual summons to dinner. The squire, with all the courtesy of an old English gentleman,

gave his arm to his wife; as he did so, he cast a meaning glance at Archibald.

It seemed cruel to abandon Sophy to such a fate; but it was so. The squire led his lady down to dinner. Sophy was left, absolutely left, to the tender mercies of Archibald Cranstead!

Things having come to this crisis, Archibald, in a leisurely manner, got up. Sophy's cheek was red as a rose; she was burning all over with indignation.

"Come, Miss Hensman," said Archibald, coolly, and as if driven to it by necessity, "I suppose I must take you down to dinner."

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

NECESSITY drives people to sad extremities. Helen had been compelled to pay another visit to Mrs. Chillingham. Her father's sad state of illness rendered it impossible to do without some addition to the slender income, out of which all his comforts and luxuries had to be provided. At the same time, he made increasing demands on her care and attention. In fact, he began, in spite of his passionate fondness and admiration for her, to dread being left with Dolores.

"She is so giddy, poor child," he would say to Helen, with a beseeching look in his sunken eyes.

Helen never turned away from that look. She rarely quitted her father during the weary days of which we are speaking. And often, when night came, and he had fallen into an uneasy slumber, she would ply her needle till nearly morning.

"He shall not want for anything while I have strength to work," thought she.

Helen had not yet told her father about Joyce's intended departure, but she could not long keep it secret. Joyce was to sail the following Thursday. Actually to sail for India! She had never seen him since that terrible night, when it had become a fact that he was to go;—that a desolation, such as she had not yet experienced, was to settle down upon her. She acquiesced now in the stroke. It was her nature to submit. But not the less did Helen suffer.

Joyce had written to her from London, begging her to come and see him, for the last time, on board his ship. It was her only chance for bidding him farewell, and Helen had resolved to go—that is, if she could trust her father for a few hours with Dolores. She felt as if her heart would break if she did not see Joyce again.

The weather had become milder. The snow had gone, and the south wind blew softly. Mr. Percival had revived under its influence.

"I think I am much better, Helen," he said to her, one night—the very night before Joyce's departure—the very night when poor Helen, with a bursting heart, was about to make arrangements for starting, by daybreak, for London.

There would be time for her to get back by eight o'clock in the evening, *having bid Joyce farewell.*

What a world of anguish there was in those few words!

How she would bear it she hardly knew, and she

did not care to think. There was little space left in Helen's busy life for the indulgence of grief. She had laid her plans for the furtherance of her father's comfort during her absence. Old Susan had been engaged for the day. She dare not trust the sick man entirely to the tender mercies of Dolores. The wine and beef-tea had been duly attended to. All that remained was to ask her father's consent to the journey.

She had not had the heart to tell him before; besides, she did not for a moment think he would refuse. When, at length, she broke the news to him, it was with a flood of bitter tears—tears it was out of her power, struggle as she might, to repress.

He listened with some anxiety. Then he said, in a tremulous voice, "And has he asked you to go with him, Helen?"

Something in the tone in which he spoke made Helen put her hand in his.

"Dear papa, nothing shall ever induce me to leave you."

He looked up at her with a glistening eye. Then he drew her nearer to him, and said, with more affection than he had ever shown to her before, "God bless you, my child; God bless you."

She stooped and kissed his forehead. His look of love was a drop of precious balm shed upon her inward wound.

"God bless you, Helen! You have been very good to me. I am sorry that Joyce—but there, I will not say much about it;" for Helen turned her face quickly away. "He will, perhaps, get on in India. I think he is right to go."

Helen had sat down on a stool at her father's feet. It was where Dolores was used to place herself, her father's hand laid fondly upon her glossy curls. Helen had never sat there before, but a new link seemed to have arisen between her and her father. In her grief and desolation, she seemed to cling to him with yearning affection.

"Poor Helen, we must try to comfort her," said he, kindly; "five years will soon be over, dear, in a life as young as yours."

Young! Helen felt as though her very youth were stricken dead that night.

"I have known many men to get fortunes over yonder, and come back rich as princes. I shall not live to see it, alas!" and he sighed heavily; "but you may ride in your carriage some of these days, Helen."

"I do not wish it, papa," replied Helen, trying to smile through her tears. "I only desire a competence, with—"

She could not utter the word. Another moment, and, for the first time in her life, Helen was sobbing in her father's arms.

He was very loving with her. Helen never thought of it without the tenderest emotion. It was one of those mitigations sent by a merciful Providence in the hour of deepest woe. He made her sit by him, and, with her hand in his, tried to console and to comfort her. He talked to her of the happiness of reunion, of the certainty that Joyce would be faithful and true, and strive hard to make



the separation as short as possible. It was not often he did justice to his future son-in-law; but he did so now. Helen knew with what intention. Then he gave his free consent to her journey. Indeed, he appeared anxious that she should see Joyce again;—anxious, too, and this was rare in him, that she should not be fatigued. And when he had gone to rest, he bade her kiss him, and again he blessed her, and committed her, in more solemn words than he

was wont to use, to the care and keeping of Heaven; and he told her to get to sleep quickly, as she would have to rise so soon.

Helen thought of all this many times. And how, in the morning twilight, she stole in, and drew back the curtains, and saw him lying in as calm a slumber as ever she had witnessed. And, lying in this slumber, she left him.

(To be continued.)

## THE AVALANCHE.



ON the slope of one of the beautiful Swiss mountains stood a little cottage, so shut in by the lofty peaks which towered round it, that its inhabitants could scarcely catch a glimpse of the blue sky. It was the dwelling-place of a young couple and their only child, a little boy of four years old, and poor and lonely though it was, yet it was the abode of peace and love, and no king was happier than Franz when, on his return from hunting, or else from a day's work at one of the farms in the sheltered valley at the foot of the mountain, he met his Gutchen and the little Wilhelm hastening along the mountain-path to meet and welcome him, as soon as they heard the distant sound of his voice singing some lively hunting-song.

One beautiful morning, Franz said to his wife, "I must go up the mountain to-day. The sun is shining bright and warm, and there is a good chance of finding game; besides, who knows how soon the weather may change again?"

So, putting on his hunting-coat and pouch, and taking his gun in his hand, he bade good-bye in a cheerful voice to his wife and child, and disappeared up the mountain-side. His wife had no sooner lost sight of him than she felt a strange sinking of the heart, as if she were never to see him again. She gazed out of the window, on which there were many beautiful forms traced by the frost, but she tried in vain to overcome the fears which had taken possession of her mind, and she sat down again by the fire-side with her little Wilhelm pressed closely in her arms. She was soon roused by a rushing, crashing noise, and falling on her knees she exclaimed, "God be merciful to us, or we shall be destroyed by the avalanche!" Scarcely had she uttered the words when it became as dark as midnight. The cottage was buried in the snow!

The evening was calm, and the stars shone brightly in the clear sky, when Franz descended along the homeward path with a chamois lying across his shoulder. He had seen but little game, and had climbed many giddy heights before he got near enough to take successful aim at the timid animals. He hastened eagerly along, expecting every minute to see his wife and child, as he knew he must be near the spot where the cottage stood. At length he stopped, and gazing on the masses of snow and ice

which surrounded him, cried, in a despairing voice, "My wife! my child! They are lost, buried in the cruel avalanche! May God help me and them!"

With the first ray of light, Franz and a party of sympathising friends from the nearest cottages were assembled, with spades and shovels, on the spot where he thought his home had been buried, and commenced to clear away the snow, in hopes to extricate Gutchen and her little one. For three days they worked incessantly without any success. All then lost courage except Franz, who never despaired, but continued to dig night and day, without speaking to his companions, but praying inwardly to God, who gave him strength to persevere in spite of his grief and anxiety.

In the meantime Gutchen believed herself shut up for ever in her subterranean prison. Their stock of provisions could not last long, and then she saw no prospect but death for herself and her little Wilhelm, who often asked her when it would be morning, as, by the light of the lamp, she read in her Bible of Christ's miracles, and found comfort in praying that he would save them, if it were possible; and, if not, that he would soon take them to his kingdom in heaven.

On the ninth day she suddenly heard the sound of voices above; and, at the same moment, Franz felt his spade touch a hard object, which he soon found to be the roof of his cottage. He quickly fastened a long cord round his waist, removed a portion of the roof, and descended into the little room, where he found wife and child safe and well.

And who can describe the joy of that meeting, between those who feared they had for ever parted in this world? By the light of the now expiring lamp, they knelt and offered up their thanks and praise to God, who had so wonderfully preserved them.

When Gutchen once more beheld the light of the sun, and the glittering mountain-tops, it seemed to her as if she had never before felt its beauty and splendour. The very fir-trees appeared to have decked themselves with fresher green, and her heart was full of joy as she was greeted by the kind-hearted men who had so nobly assisted in saving her.

Franz erected a cross to mark the place where his former home had stood; and many a mother points it out to her son, and tells him the story of Franz and Gutchen, and prays that he may emulate his courage and devotion.